



## Weekly Activity Update

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### Empowering Women

#### Students Enter New Women's Dormitory this Academic Year

With the start of the academic year this month, female students will begin entering the newly-rehabilitated National Women's Dormitory in Kabul. The dorm will enable girls from rural areas to attend one of four institutions of higher learning in Kabul, including the medical school, the Afghan Education University, the Polytechnic Institute and Kabul University. Last fall, President Karzai and the U.S. Ambassador inaugurated the facility of four expansive wings with three floors, a huge dining and study area with modern kitchen, pristine laundry facilities, a library, sports courts, with full access for the physically challenged. The spacious, bright dorm rooms have separate sleeping/study units for six girls. The dorm will accommodate 1,100 female students. USAID funded the original reconstruction and has committed additional funding for the following three years to ensure solid management, maintenance and food services for girls.



*With the start of the academic year in March, women will begin entering the new women's dormitory in Kabul*

### Alternative Livelihoods: USAID Responds to the Poppy Problem

#### The Problem

- In 2004, poppy production in Afghanistan expanded to 206,000 hectares (508,820 acres). About 4.5% of total cropland was devoted to opium cultivation, but in some provinces poppy accounted for 40% of cropped land.
- Afghanistan harvested 4,200 metric tons of opium in 2004, or 87% of the world's illicit production.
- The opium economy now accounts for an estimated 60% of Afghanistan's GDP.

#### The Solution

The United States Government is implementing a comprehensive platform to address the poppy problem. The counter-narcotics plan has five pillars:

- Public Information
- Law Enforcement
- **Alternative Livelihoods**
- Interdiction
- Eradication

#### Alternative Livelihoods Program

The Government of Afghanistan (GOA) has taken responsibility for dealing with the opium and heroin issues, and has moved publicly to address it. An interagency council of Afghan ministers meets weekly to direct an alternative livelihoods strategy that places responsibility for success squarely on Afghan officials. The keystone of the strategy is a decentralization of authority to provincial governors and ministry representatives. The GOA desires to accelerate licit economic growth and business activity in provinces with poppy cultivation through alternative livelihoods programs. Alternative livelihoods is more than agriculture, since over half of the rural labor force is not agricultural. Yet farm incomes drive the rural economy, so access to crops and livestock can provide sufficient incentive to reduce poppy cultivation. In addition, the Afghans aim to reduce administrative constraints to business expansion, promote credit for small business and agriculture, and encourage market-led agro-businesses. USAID supports this Afghan initiative with technical assistance and economic development programs in Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Badakhshan provinces.

## Strengthening Government: Economic Governance

### Fiscal and Financial Technical Advances

Initiated in December 2002, Economic Governance programs have strengthened the overall economy through reforms and training within its fiscal, financial, and regulatory sectors. Fiscal responsibility has improved with the installation of a new banking framework. One of the Afghan banking sector reforms is the implementation of an Internet Communications Platform. Da Afghanistan Bank's (Afghanistan's Central Bank) Panjshir and Logar capital branches have been brought into the DAFB Branches.com, bringing the total number of DAB branches operating on the automated system to 29.

This internet-based system makes real-time data possible for daily and monthly reports, which include number of payments, accounting snapshots, cash positions, and current account balances. Instant access to this data greatly facilitates performance management, activity tracking, accounting data collection and the realization of specific benchmarks under the International Monetary Fund's Staff Monitored Program.



*Economic Governance programs implement internet systems for Afghanistan's banking sector*

## Security Incidents

*Note: Hostile attacks are reported through USAID's security contractors and the Associated Press*

- **Number of Hostile Attacks:** During this reporting period, there were three hostile attacks and none resulted in injury or fatality.
- **USAID Related:** During this reporting period, there was only one hostile attack on USAID related projects and/or staff. There were five other attacks and threats against other aid agencies and NGOs.
- **Latest Attack:** On the morning of February 21 in Farah Province, a group of villagers attempted to remove the reinforcing steel from a demolished bridge at Km310 on the Kandahar-Herat Highway. The local NGO, KoINat JV, was in the process of clearing the demolished bridge. The guards at the site removed the villagers without incident. However, later that same day, approximately 50 villagers returned and attacked the guards with rocks. A fight ensued and the KoINat JV workers left the area and returned to camp. Security Coordinators arrived and the villagers fled the scene. Twenty-three villagers were taken into custody and handed over to Ministry of Interior (MOI) authorities and transported to a nearby police station in Farah Rod. The Farah PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team), province authorities and MOI were all notified.

